

Business May Be Your Life – But – Life Is *Your* Business Part VIII: Lasting Happiness^{A,B}



James A. Cusumano, PhD

“Happiness is not a goal; it is a by-product”.

Eleanor Roosevelt

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Lasting happiness is always a by-product, never achieved as a direct goal.
- Happiness results by following your true sense of purpose in all that you do.
- Your sense of purpose must draw on your personal essence – that special attribute that distinguishes you from others.
- Purpose leads to passion which unfolds creativity, generating innovation. This results in gratitude, which generates lasting happiness.

HAPPINESS SYNDROME

It's that time of the year when many people make resolutions and often ask a few pointed questions about their life. How did last year go? Am I on track as to where I want to be? Am I content? Is my life meaningful? Am I happy?

Every year there are literally thousands of books and articles published on how to be happy – usually how to get “there” faster, or to get more of “it,” however you wish to define “there” and “it.” This is not a fad; it goes back thousands of years. Aristotle concluded some 2,300 years ago that more than anything else in life, people seek happiness, usually through beauty, money, or power – and this approach in and of itself, never succeeds. Why? For one thing, happiness cannot be achieved directly as a goal; it is always the result of our doing something; as Eleanor Roosevelt rightfully notes, it's a by-product. But then, how does happiness truly unfold? What makes us happy?

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

First, it helps to agree as to, “What is happiness?” Most dictionaries define happiness as a state of mind characterized by feelings of contentment, love, satis-

faction, pleasure or joy, i.e., personal fulfillment. I think we must also recognize that there is no such thing as constant happiness – except perhaps for a few “enlightened” saints who spend their lives in meditative bliss. But that's not the path for most of us. Our lives are generally lived between the poles of joy and sorrow, laughter and sighs, achievement and disappointment. The key is how to live a happy life on average. At the end of the day, a week, a month, a year – when you look back, do you feel that deep sense of fulfillment sought by the spirit inside you?

If happiness is not a goal then what leads to happiness? I think we must certainly live by our basic values, those personal rules and guidelines ingrained in our consciousness that set the compass by which we live our life. Those values may well be different for different people. However, when we violate any them, we feel stressed, unsatisfied, and unhappy. But following your basic values is not enough to achieve lasting happiness and contentment. As the mathematicians would say, “It is a necessary but not sufficient condition.”

ROAD TO HAPPINESS

I think the fundamental requirement is that you continuously pursue your sense of purpose, your *raison d'être*, as the French would say. And this means applying your personal essence to create value for **both** the world and for you. Each of us is born with a personal essence, that fundamental capability or skill that differentiates us from others in our social and professional circles. And when you find that special piece of you and apply it in whatever you do, it generates **personal passion** – an incredible force that evaporates fear, unleashes creativity, and has been known to change the world.

Paulo Coelho, author of *The Alchemist*, tells us that all of us know what our personal essence is when we are quite young, perhaps somewhere between the ages of 5 and 15 (**Figure 1**). But the way of the world has the effect of dulling our senses over time, and by the time we are adults, we often either forget what that special asset is, or we have been talked out of it by others. We don't think in these terms when we are youngsters, but that skill is there, and it can be kindled in the strangest and most unexpected way. In my own case, I have had a life-long passion for and involvement in technology and entertainment. I discovered both of these passions between 8 and 12 years of age.

For example, consider my interest in technology. It was precipitated with a Christmas gift of a chemistry set, shortly before my 9th birthday. I'm not sure I would give a 9 year-old a chemistry set today, but my

Sicilian parents were from the “old school,” and since I refused to become a priest, they thought well, maybe a doctor, and perhaps the chemistry set just might guide me in that direction. After doing all of the usual “boy stuff” of making stink bombs, rockets and fireworks, I found I could make useful products such as ink, adhesives, and simple cosmetics. I set up a small lab in the basement of our home and began “manufacturing” products and selling them in the neighborhood. Every cent I made went into that laboratory. It was a marvelous experience; people were actually willing to pay for products I made using my “technology.” This filled me with passion and as a result, technology has remained an important part of my professional world, ever since.

My deep interest in entertainment happened in a similar manner. Growing up in New Jersey during the frigid winters of the 1950s, and as the oldest of 10 children from parents of very modest means, I had to go to work when I was 10 years old. Half of my take went to my parents; the other half was mine. I wanted an “inside” job away from the cold winters, so I asked my mom and dad if I could take piano lessons to start a band to play for dances and other events. They couldn't afford the music lessons so dad asked Vince O'Brian, one of his World War II army buddies to do him a favor. Vince was a professional piano player and band leader. He taught me the tricks of the trade and within 2 years I had my own band and was making good money working “inside.”

Living next to New York City, the capital of rock'n roll music during the 1950s, as a teenager I began to write songs and sell them in Harlem to singing groups. One thing led to another and then at the right place at the right time at age 16, our group called the Royal Teens recorded a novelty song called “Short Shorts.”

^{A)} EDITOR'S NOTE – This is Part VIII in a series of articles based on the author's experience as an entrepreneur, having founded several successful businesses, including Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a billion-dollar public company. His business experience base spans “5 lives” – A multimillion record sales recording artist; R&D Director for Exxon; Chairman & founder of 2 public companies; CEO, founder and Executive Producer for Chateau Wally Films; Chairman & Owner of Chateau Mcely, an international award-winning luxury hotel & SPA. This article is extracted from his latest book, presently in preparation and entitled, “My Little Book of Business – Tales of Purpose, Passion & Enterprise.” Parts I-V of this series deal with “Creating A Fulfilling Life.” Part VI addresses “Building A Successful Business,” and the current series focuses on Conscious Capitalism and Conscious Leadership as a means to lasting fulfillment in life and success in business.

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Figure 1: Somewhere between the ages of 5 and 15 we discover our Personal Essence – that special gift that distinguishes us from others



We sold 2 million records and the rest is history. We worked with many of the early pioneers of rock'n roll music – from Elvis to Chuck Berry to Buddy Holly and the Crickets.

I have seen this kind of journey played over and over again for people who say they are content and happy. It's a simple but profound human equation, and it always works:

PURPOSE → PASSION → CREATIVITY → INNOVATION → GRATITUDE → HAPPINESS

Following your sense of **purpose** leads to **passion** which unleashes **creativity** that generates **innovation** providing you with a sense of **gratitude**, which is the source of all lasting **HAPPINESS** (Figure 2). It is not beauty, power or money. It's not that they're unimportant, but as Jigmi Thinley, the Prime Minister of Bhutan exclaimed so eloquently this past September before the United Nations General Assembly, "Happiness comes from a judicious equilibrium between gains in material comfort and growth of the mind and spirit in a just and sustainable environment¹."

For those of us in business, it behooves us to see that to the best of our ability, we place our employees in jobs and an environment that is most effective in tapping into their personal essence and sense of purpose in this world. We saw in the last article of this series that a study of thousands of employees by expert corporate strategist, Gary Hamel, showed that only 20 percent of people are happy in their jobs². Why is that? A lack of purpose causes anxiety and people then work inefficiently. Can you imagine the level of productivity and collective sense of fulfillment and happiness if we were to tap into only a fraction of our employee's personal essence and sense of purpose? This would provide the ultimate competitive advantage!

FORMULA OF FIVE

So then what instills and reinforces a sense of personal purpose? I call it the "Formula of Five." It is simple to state, but takes continuous commitment to achieve – however, the payoff is substantial. In decreasing priority, the key elements are:

1. **The challenge must draw on the person's personal essence.** It does no good to ask a plumber to do an electrician's job. If you are an employer, the key is to work with employees to uncover the nature of their assets and strengths. The investment in time and money is more than worth the effort. At Chateau Mcely we do this by multiple interviews

and day-long assessment tests conducted by skilled human resource practitioners. This is followed by periodic discussions with our employees throughout the year.

2. **The job or position must appeal to the person's need to "help the greater good."** This is one of the world's best kept secrets – almost everyone wants to do something meaningful, to make a positive difference in this world. It is up to the employer to find the means to articulate a vision that captures the excitement of employees. I recently met an executive and ask him what business he was in. He replied that he was in the business of manufacturing, marketing and selling beer. I think a more inspirational way of answering my question might have been, "In a world besieged by rapidly increasing stress, strain, and disenchantment, our company is in the business of stimulating relaxation, conversation and relationships, and fostering friendship and hospitality."

3. **There should be some reasonable probability of success in achieving any goals that are set.** No

Figure 2: Following your sense of purpose leads to passion which unleashes creativity that generates innovation providing a sense of gratitude, which is the source of all lasting happiness.

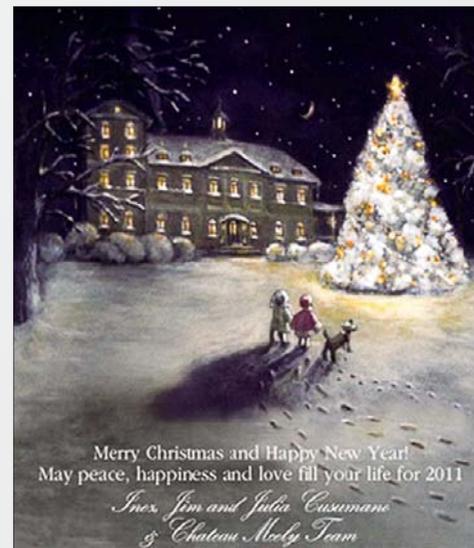


one wants to work hard without some level of accomplishment.

4. **Employees should have a reasonable level of autonomy.** It's best to higher good people, give them a set of specific goals that support the company, and then let them decide how best to get the work done.
5. **Employees should share in any success that they help achieve.** This could include public and private positive feedback, a salary raise, stock options, and as we do at Chateau Mcely, meaningful profit sharing at the end of the year.

But notice that compensation and other financial rewards are in last place. In a moment of truth, money is not the primary driving force for most people.

Figure 3: Holiday Wishes for Health, Happiness and a Wonder-Filled New Year from the Chateau Mcely Team



FINAL THOUGHTS

Perhaps, I can close with advice that I give to my three daughters whenever they are willing to listen:

1. Don't waste your time trying to live someone else's life. Early on, you likely know what drives you. It is important to follow that little voice inside.
2. Don't be trapped by dogma – living blindly with other people's thinking. Yes, listen to others and integrate their thinking into your own as you see fit. However, rarely does, "It can't be done!" turn out to be correct. Running the mile in less than 4 minutes was once thought to be impossible, until Roger Bannister broke that record on May 6, 1954. Subsequently, several other runners broke the record, as well, after "They knew it could be done!"
3. Don't let the noise of opinion drown out your inner voice.
4. Have courage to follow your intuition. That little compass and computer inside you is quite a special machine (Figure 3).

James A. Cusumano, PhD ■

¹ Jeffrey Sachs, "In Search of Equilibrium," *New York Times*, December 2, 2010.

² James A. Cusumano, "Business May Be Your Life – BUT – Life is Your Business: Part VII Conscious Capitalism – Preventing Economic Chaos," *LEADERS Magazine*, Volume VI, 2010, p. 98–99.

About the Author: James A. Cusumano is Chairman and Owner of Chateau Mcely (www.ChateauMcely.Com), chosen in 2007 by the European Union as the only "Green" 5-star luxury hotel in Central and Eastern Europe and in 2008 by the World Travel Awards as the Leading Green Hotel in the World. He is a former Research Director for Exxon, and subsequently founded two public companies in Silicon Valley, one in clean power generation, the other in pharmaceuticals manufacture via environmentally-benign, low-cost, catalytic technologies. While he was Chairman and CEO, the latter – Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc. – grew in less than 5 years, to a \$1 billion enterprise with 2,000 employees. He is co-author of "Freedom from Mid-East Oil," recently released by World Business Academy Press (www.WorldBusiness.Org) and can be reached at Jim@ChateauMcely.Com.